

Rockville Elementary School/ Park Street Elementary School

Compiled by Cindy Kebba, City of Rockville staff.

Sources used:

Richard Montgomery High School Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Survey Form #M:26/26;

“History of Park Street School 1935-1966” by the History Committee of Park Street School;

MHT National Register Eligibility Review Form M:26-26-1 by Kelley Steele, Architectural Historian for the Maryland State Highway Administration.

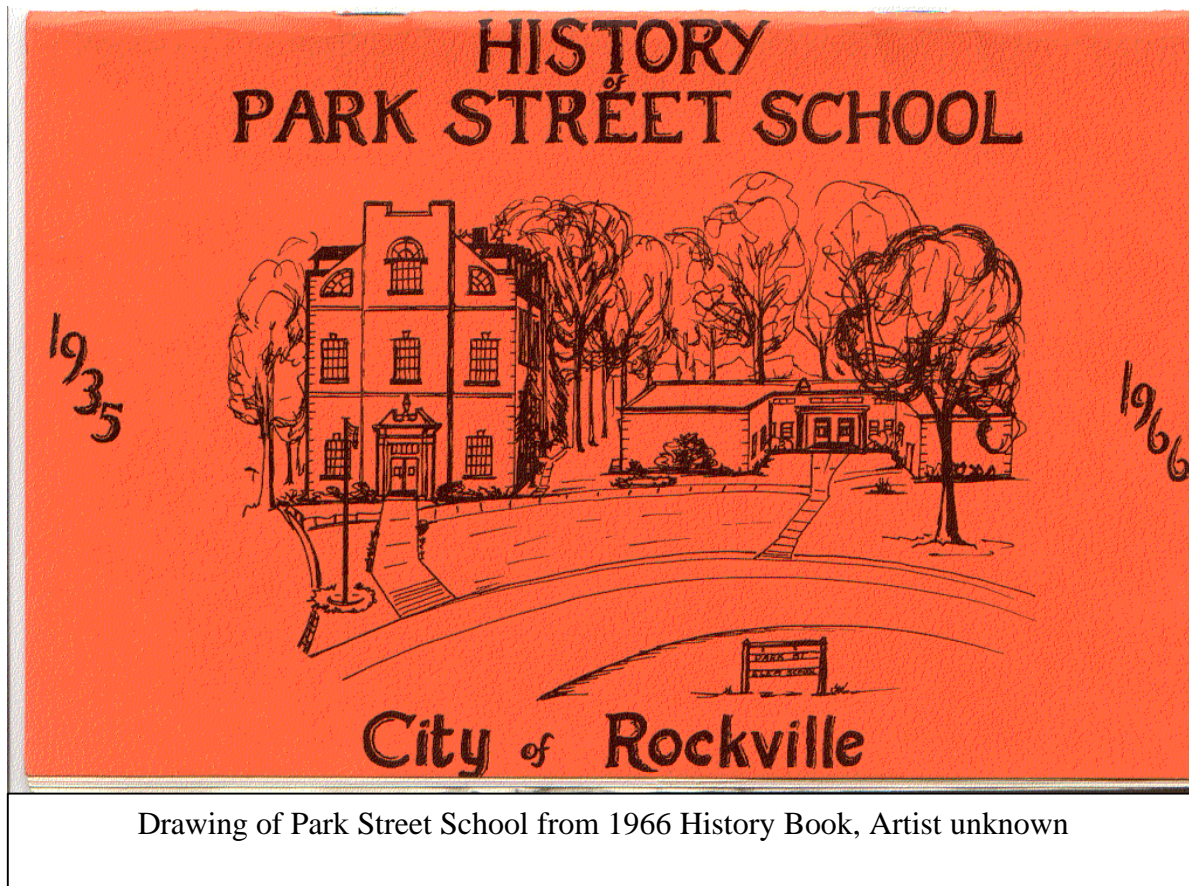
Photographs and map by City of Rockville staff.

I. Environmental Description

The former Park Street Elementary School was built at the end of Park Street on a cul-de-sac. In 1980, Fleet Street was extended through the cul-de-sac to join East Jefferson Street at Richard Montgomery Drive, separating the school from its namesake street. The building is now known as 401 Fleet Street, or the Fleet Street Annex. Access is by driveway from Fleet, with parking areas in front of the building. The building is located on an elevation overlooking Richard Montgomery High School and its sports fields and track, to the east. The site is treed, with large mature oaks to the west and south. It is located on the site of the grandstand of the old Fairgrounds of Rockville, which offered recreational diversion to county residents in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

II. Building Description

The former Park Street Elementary School’s original core structure, like Richard Montgomery High School, has had many alterations and additions through the years. Originally it was a 2.5 story, four- (dormered) bay Georgian style brick building built in 1934-35 to address the educational needs of Montgomery County. Additions more than doubled the length of the structure, making it an eight- (dormered) bay section with southern flat roofed portion. The original three-bay façade has also been enlarged due to additions to the east and west. Decorative elements include slightly projecting beltcourses, false brick quoins at the corners, a brick seven-course water table, Palladian and quarter-round fanlight windows, and a massive exterior end chimney with parapeted end. The end gabled roof with eight front-gabled dormers on each side is slate. The foundation is concrete and brick. Windows are double sash 8/8 with grey granite sills. The front façade is the chimneyed and parapeted end of the structure facing north to Fleet Street.



Drawing of Park Street School from 1966 History Book, Artist unknown

The structure was surveyed in 1987 by Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation, Ltd. Since the time of that survey, the second and fourth windows on the first story of the third building segment on the west side were bricked in. The survey indicated that the interior was undergoing renovation due to changing county needs. Currently the school provides offices for the Department of Health and Human Services. Other than this change in use and the removal of windows, no alterations have occurred to the structure since the 1987 survey.

III. HISTORY

The former Park Street School is located on the site of the grandstand of the old Fairgrounds of Rockville. An annual County Fair was held for four days in the month of August. Families came from every section of the Montgomery County in wagons and carriages, and stayed for the duration of the Fair. Harness racing was one of the main attractions, but the Fair also provided other events such as horse pulls, games of chance, showing of prized livestock and poultry, needlework, homegrown produce, baked and canned goods. A building called the Exhibit House displayed the prize-winning entries of the various categories. The Fair gave candidates for public office the opportunity for some pleasant electioneering.

As times changed, the Fairgrounds lost its appeal to more sophisticated and commercialized sites. Meanwhile, a growing population created the need for a new elementary school. The Fairgrounds property was purchased from its many co-owners in the latter part of 1933. Ground was broken for a new elementary school in the latter part of 1934 at the site of the old racetrack grandstand, a major feature of the old Fairgrounds. The building opened, with the help of



Works Progress Administration (WPA) labor, in 1935 as a four-classroom structure housing first and second grades. Also in 1935, Bradley C. Karn contracted to add to the building, making it a six-classroom elementary school. It was named Rockville Elementary School and operated without its own principal until Miss Kristen Nilsson was appointed in June 1936.

Right: Mrs. Hattie Kingdon at the school entrance from “History of Park Street School”

Members of the original teaching staff were Mrs. Hattie Kingdon, Miss Mary Brewer, Miss Sarah Ward, and Mrs. Lucy V. Barnsley. An elementary school named for Mrs. Barnsley was built off Norbeck Road in Rockville and opened in 1965.

The first and only school museum in the County’s public school system was established by Mrs. Kingdon in 1923 at the old Rockville Academy. Subsequently, the museum was housed in the upper hall of Rockville Elementary School only to be dismantled in later years when the school became a Junior High School. Unfortunately, it was impossible to re-establish the old school museum because most of the exhibits were lost.



Mrs. Lucy Barnsley from “History of Park St. School

Mrs. Lucy Barnsley maintained a victory garden at the school during the period of World War II. Many of these gardens flourished throughout the nation during the War. The garden was farmed by the boys at the school and the girls canned vegetables at harvest time.

In 1942, a new Richard Montgomery High School was built adjacent to the Park Street school site. The previous high school with that name was located at the corner of Monroe Street and East Montgomery Avenue and had been almost destroyed by a fire the prior year. The Richard Montgomery High School site is also part of the old Fairgrounds of Rockville and the street entrance to the high school was the main entrance to the Fairgrounds.

Two additions were made to the original Park Street school structure in the 1940s in order to complete the phasing in of a six grade elementary school and to adequately service the growing

student population. In 1944, a second building consisting of four classrooms was completed with the help of federal funds. A fifth and final classroom was added to this second, smaller building in 1948.

In 1954, the first five grades were shifted to the newly opened West Rockville Elementary School on Beall Avenue and the little school on Park Street became a junior high school. At the time of this shift, Mr. Al Gibson, principal of Park Street went to West Rockville and Mr. Guy Jewell became principal of the junior high school at Park Street.

New housing developments and burgeoning population necessitated the construction of a new junior high school on the eastern side of Rockville. Broome Junior High School opened in Fall 1957, and the school at Park Street once again became an elementary school facility. It took as its new name "Park Street Elementary School".

Mrs. Clair Baum was appointed principal of Park Street Elementary School and served until 1962. The school not only served kindergarten through sixth grade in its first year of reconversion, but it was the first school in the county to serve junior high special education classes.

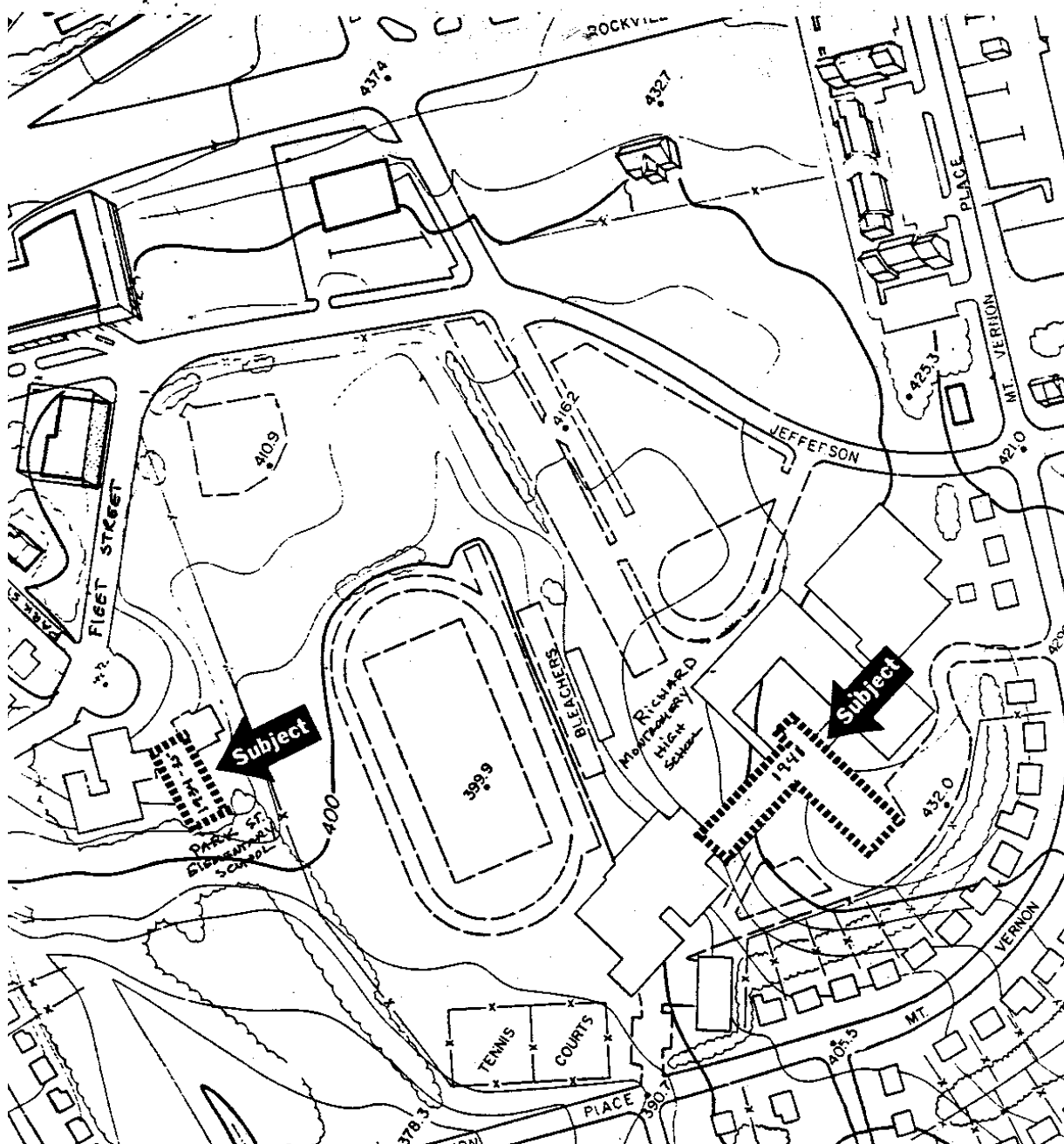
Park Street Elementary School was among the first schools to initiate Montgomery County's desegregation program in 1959. At the time, Park Street School maintained the largest percentage of de segregated student enrollment in the County.

The Park Street Elementary School, Rockville's oldest public school, closed in June 1977. There were 56 students in the last graduating class.

Some of the individuals who attended Park Street Elementary School include:

Thomas M. Anderson, Jr.	Maryland House of Delegates, 1962-1966
William Berry	Fire Inspector for Montgomery County Assistant Fire Chief for Rockville Volunteer Fire Department
Gordon Coleman	First Baseman, Cincinnati Reds
Mike Curtis	Baltimore Colts
William Linthicum	Rockville city attorney, 1958-1964
J. Gordon McDonald	Director of Insurance and Federal Aid, Montgomery County Delegation

Description (continued) : Richard Montgomery and Park Street Schools
Site Plan showing facilities and outlines of earliest buildings.





IV. Significance

When Montgomery County established a public school system in 1860, Rockville was the first to receive a primary school. Thirty years later, Rockville High School became the County's first high school. Richard Montgomery High School and Park Street Elementary School, successors to those early educational institutions, are sited on properties that have long been used for public and educational purposes. Both are among the oldest school buildings still in use in Montgomery County.

Park Street Elementary School was constructed and added to in response to overcrowding in the school system, resulting from the growth of the Washington, D.C. Montgomery County suburbs during the World War II period. It is unique because of the metamorphosis it was required to undergo to meet the demands of a constantly changing population and an expanding educational system.

The school was designed by Howard Cutler, principal designer of Montgomery County public schools and credited with defining the education architecture in the county during the 1920s and 1930s. The Park School embodies distinctive characteristics of a type and period of

construction, specifically representing the Georgian style and Montgomery County school design. The school represents both county academic trends as well as the spirit of national architectural trends. The school was constructed by local builder Bradley C. Karn.

In addition to capturing popular design, the school was built with the help of Work Project Administration (WPA) labor and therefore provides a local architectural example of federal works projects. It is located on the site of the grandstand of the old Fairgrounds of Rockville.

While these characteristics support significance, modern additions, alterations, street construction, and use change have compromised the structure's design, setting, materials, feeling, and association. Though the property does possess aspects of location and workmanship, it does not retain integrity. In addition, the most outstanding Georgian feature, the main entrance and porch, was destroyed during later additions.

See 1999 photos of Park Street Elementary School following pages by Kelly Steele.



North and west
elevations

Park Street
Elementary School

401 Fleet St.



North and east
elevations

Park Street
Elementary
School

401 Fleet Street



West and south
(rear) elevations

Park Street
Elementary School

401 Fleet Street



East and south (rear)
elevations

Park Street
Elementary School

401 Fleet Street